

Flathead/Lincoln FSA

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(406) 752-4242 Ext. 2

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Dates to Remember:

March 17 – NAP sales closing date for all crops except value loss and honey

March 17 – Crop insurance sales closing date for 2007 spring-seeded crops

March 31 – Final loan/LDP availability date for barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed, wheat and sesame seed harvested in 2007

April 1 – Deadline for payment limitation changes

NAP Pull-Off Date – May 1, 2008

June 2 - Final loan/LDP availability date for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard, safflower, soybeans, small chickpeas, sunflowers harvested in 2007



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March 2008

FSA Working Across Montana

FSA in Montana issued more than \$242.5 million in programs payments and loans to Montana farmers and ranchers during Fiscal Year 2007 running from October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2007. Following is a breakdown of the amounts issued through some of the programs administered by FSA in Montana:

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	\$116,612,674
Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)	\$774,181
Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP)	\$80,462,148
Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)	\$723,740
Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)	\$1,917,345
Milk Income Loss Contract Extension Program	\$419,932
14 Youth Loans	\$61,200
88 Beginning Farmer Loans	\$8.0 million
61 Minority Producer Loans	\$3.4million

A summary of the amounts issued and for what programs may be found on the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt>. The summary also includes the total of the amount of payments issued by each individual count

National Agriculture Week is March 16-22, 2008.

It is a time to celebrate American agriculture and honor the people who work to meet our everyday needs. FSA in Montana thanks the many farmers and ranchers we work with on a daily basis.



Montana NRCS' Easement Programs: Tools For Long-term Conservation

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Montana offers two easement programs to eligible landowners interested in long-term land conservation. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) aim to provide solutions to local community issues related to farms, ranches, rural lands, and other areas by establishing conservation easements on eligible lands.

The WRP is a voluntary program which provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of restoring wetlands through cost share or restoring and enrolling eligible lands through permanent or 30-year easements, all the while retaining private ownership. In the case of the easement options, a one-time payment is made to landowners in compensation for transferring certain real property interests. To individually qualify for a WRP conservation easement, the landowner must have owned the land for at least 12 months prior to enrolling it in the program (although some exceptions apply) and have an average adjusted gross income below \$2.5 million for the three preceding tax years. For land to qualify, it must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits.

The FRPP is a voluntary program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture by providing matching funds to partner organizations with existing farm and ranch land protection programs. These funds are used to purchase development rights or other interests in land from landowners through a conservation easement. Participating landowners retain rights to use the property for agriculture and agree to develop and implement a conservation plan for any highly erodible land. To qualify for FRPP, the farm or ranch offered must generally be privately owned and contain prime, unique, or other productive soil, although a few other qualifications also apply. Qualified applicants must meet the adjusted gross income criteria mentioned above.

Montana's farmers and ranchers have shown consistent interest in WRP and FRPP. Currently Montana contains 24 parcels enrolled in FRPP totaling 30,277 acres and 39 projects totaling a little over 24,000 acres for WRP. If you think one of these programs would similarly work well for you and would like to submit an application or simply learn more, call or visit your local USDA Service Center or Conservation District office. Information is also available on the web at <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov>. Please note that passing of a new Farm Bill could change some of the information presented here.

NAP Deadline – March 17

The sales closing date for all Noninsurable (NAP) crops except value loss and honey is fast approaching. **Monday, March 17, 2008**, is the final date for producers to file an application (CCC-471) for NAP coverage for many spring crops. An administrative service fee is required. The service fee is \$100 per crop per administrative county or \$300 per producer per county, not to exceed \$900 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Service fees may be waived for limited-resource producers. Payment of the service fee does not guarantee coverage since there are other eligibility requirements that must also be met. Please check with the county office for those eligibility requirements.

Mixed Grain/Hay Loan LDP Eligibility

USDA does not establish loan rates for mixed commodities. A mixed commodity harvested as grain that does not meet grading standards is not eligible for a loan or Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP). A mixed commodity that is hayed or harvested as silage is not eligible for an LDP.

Eligibility for Grain/Oilseeds/Pulse Crops Harvested as **Grain** – If a mixed commodity is harvested as grain and a farm-stored loan or LDP is applied for, a sample of the harvested crop must be taken to a licensed Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) laboratory for grading, at the producer's expense. Loan or LDP eligibility will be determined based on the results of the sample.

Eligibility for Grain/Oilseeds/Pulse Crops Harvested as **Other Than Grain** – If the mixed commodity is harvested as hay or silage, there is no test to determine the percentage of each commodity in the mixture to establish the grade and class. Therefore, crops planted in a mixture and hayed or harvested for silage are not eligible for an LDP.

A commodity planted as a nurse crop with alfalfa may be eligible for an LDP if a full seeding is planted and the commodity is reported as the intended use for grain or forage. The County Committee may require documentation to support the seeding rate.

Final Loan/LDP Availability is March 31

March 31 is the final loan/LDP availability date for Barley, Canola, Flaxseed, Oats, Rapeseed, Crambe, Wheat and Honey. For the 2007 crop of the commodities listed above, loans and LDP's will no longer be available after March 31, 2008.

Beware of Crop Insurance Rebating Schemes

With the spring sales closing date for many Federal crop insurance policies right around the corner, crop insurance agents have stepped up their marketing efforts. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) has received reports from producers and agents that some aggressive marketers have been approaching producers with rebating offers. These schemes promise lower insurance premiums, refunds, dividends, or items of value tied to crop insurance purchases. Most of these activities are illegal. RMA reminds all Federal crop insurance program participants that it is now coordinating with state regulators to take appropriate regulatory action against all those who are found to promote or participate in such schemes.

Producers who are found to participate in illegal rebating activities will not only lose their crop insurance coverage but will also lose eligibility in all USDA programs.

Producers and agents can report suspicions of illegal rebating to the OIG Hotline:

1-800-424-9121



DID YOU KNOW!!!

Americans today consume 17.3 billion quarts of popped popcorn each year! The average American eats about 68 quarts!

Montana Couples Can Receive Estate Planning Incentive

The first 40 couples who work through an estate planning process can receive \$100 off of any follow-up attorney fees as part of a free Web-based program for young and old farm and ranch couples offered by Montana State University (MSU) Extension.

To get the process started, MSU Extension developed easy-to-use estate planning materials on the Web. The Next Generation Estate Planning project guides couples through estate planning, enabling them to make informed decisions by explaining basic terms and how to pass along property without probate costs. It describes how property can be dispersed when there is no will and gives details of the probate process, including establishing custodial accounts for children under 18.

All materials and forms are available free of charge and help prepare couples for a visit to an estate planning attorney. The first 40 couples to complete the form before June 1, 2008 can receive a \$100 certificate to be used toward attorney expenses for estate planning, which the attorney returns to Marsha Goetting, MSU Extension family Economics Specialist for payment.

For further information, log on to <http://www.nextgeneration.montana.edu> and view the cover letter or contact Marsha Goetting at 406/994-5695 or goetting@montana.edu.

This project is available through a grant from the Washington State University Western Center for Risk Management Education. Collaborators include MSU Extension, MT Grain Growers, MT Department of Ag and the State Bar of MT.

NRCS Offers Incentive Payments

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers incentive payments under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) for the following:

- **Conversion from conventional tillage to No-Till operation.** The incentive is **\$11.00 per acre** for three years on a 640 acre limit.
- **Precision Ag Methods or Developing a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP).** For Precision Ag the payment for setting up nutrient zones is **\$8.00 per acre and \$22.50 per soil test**. The NMP incentive with no precision Ag is **\$55.00 per analysis**.

EQIP incentives do not cover currently installed practices. Figures and practices are based on 2008 Cost Share Rates and are subject to change in 2009. Available practices may change after the approval by congress of the new Farm Bill. **Deadline for 2009 funding: June 1st, 2008.** Please contact Angel Rosario at 752-4242 ext. 3 for more information.

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FSA reviews every producer's eligibility file to determine who is authorized to sign program documents in representative capacities and reviews all program documents to determine if the signature format is proper.

For a complete listing of FSA signature requirements, contact the FSA office or logon to the Montana FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt> and click on the **Signature Authority Pamphlet** link under "In the News."

Ensure Benefits Are Received in a Timely Manner

To ensure USDA program benefits are received in a timely manner, please ensure you are consistent in the way you are presenting your operation to all USDA agencies including NRCS, Risk Management Agency (RMA), FSA and any other USDA agency programs you may partake in. For example, if you have signed up for program benefits with FSA as Joe Farmer, please sign up with NRCS as Joe Farmer. This will ensure Joe Farmer has completed all program paperwork and is eligible to receive payments. When in doubt, ask your county office.